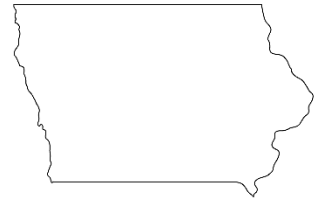


Sgt. Brandon Ketchum Never Again Act

Introduced by Rep. Dave Loebsack



The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) reports that 20 veterans commit suicide every day. One death of a veteran to suicide is too many, and this is a national health crisis that must be addressed.

Many of our veterans face post-traumatic stress disorder and other serious mental health issues upon returning home. I cannot imagine the toll that being deployed takes, but I do know that every veteran has sacrificed too much to ever feel alone when in crisis. Veterans report that coping with these conditions can feel lonely and overwhelming. Yet, despite the stigma that still surrounds mental health issues in America, some veterans speak up and seek help from the VA when in crisis. When these veterans reach out, we as a country owe it to them to answer their call.

Background

In the summer of 2016, a veteran named Sgt. Brandon Ketchum told his psychiatrist at the Iowa City VA Medical Center that he needed to be admitted to the Medical Center's psychiatric ward because he was in mental health crisis. He was told that he was not considered to be a high enough suicide risk and was turned away. Hours later, Sgt. Ketchum took his own life.

This was not the first time a veteran struggling with mental health issues has been turned away when they felt they needed in-patient psychiatric care and asked for help from the VA. This is unacceptable and we must take action to ensure that this never happens again.

What the Sgt. Brandon Ketchum Never Again Act does

The Sgt. Brandon Ketchum Never Again Act requires that when a veteran enrolled in the VA health care system asks to be admitted at a VA Medical Center for in-patient psychiatric care, the VA must provide care for the veteran in the psychiatric ward of that Medical Center. If there are not enough beds or providers at that location, the VA must find care for the veteran at a non-VA facility. Simply put, under the Sgt. Brandon Ketchum Never Again Act, if veterans ask for mental health care from the VA, they will get it.

We need action now

By giving veterans the power to get the mental health treatment they want, we can take an important step to ensuring that no veteran ever again wonders whether he or she is "sick" enough to be admitted for psychiatric care.

Groups supporting the Sgt. Brandon Ketchum Never Again Act

Military Order of the Purple Heart, Stop Soldier Suicide, National Guard Association of the United States, Association of the United States Navy, and the American Legion